

His funeral will be this Friday in Houston, Texas, and his fellow officers will wear their black cloth of sacrifice across their badges. Peace officers are the last strand of wire in the fence between the law and those that violate the law.

Officer Timothy Abernethy lived and died serving the people of Texas and the City of Houston.

And that's the just way it is.

THE AUTO INDUSTRY FINANCING AND RESTRUCTURING ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to commend Chairman BARNEY FRANK, the House leadership, and the administration for working together to bring relief to the automobile industry and millions of workers. By passing the Auto Industry Financing and Restructuring Act, H.R. 7321, we took the monumental step of both saving jobs and setting the U.S. automotive industry on a path that will make it globally effective, efficient, and competitive. And equally important, we established a new standard of accountability that must be enforced for any institutions seeking government assistance.

For months, the Federal Government has been blindly throwing money at nearly every financial institution that blinks with no written requirements on how that money is to be used and with no written standards of transparency or accountability. In response, these institutions have taken hundreds of billion of taxpayer dollars and continued to do business as usual: the business of partying at the spa, getting their facials and manicures, getting millions in retention payments and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on sports sponsorships.

This type of mismanagement of taxpayer funds has left the American people suffering from bailout fatigue. I get that. I have been one of the most vocal critics of this distribution of top funds to date.

However, today's legislation is completely different. The automakers have been forced to leap over 5 million hurdles to even be considered to receive a loan. And with every demand we have made of them, these companies have willingly obliged.

We cannot have one standard for white collar employees and a different standard for blue collar employees. We need to have strict standards for every one.

The legislation passed today includes very important oversight provisions to protect taxpayer dollars, such as prohibiting golden parachutes and capping executive bonuses. It also establishes a "car czar" position to hold these companies accountable for developing and implementing viable long-term restructuring plans and ensuring compliance on financing efforts.

And yet despite these requirements, there are some who will still believe that assisting the Big Three is a continuation of throwing good money after bad. I strongly disagree. With one in ten American jobs tied to the auto industry, this should not be considered a waste of money. We're talking about 3 million jobs expecting to be lost within a year if the auto industry goes down. With men and women across America continuing to struggle to keep roofs over their heads, to make ends meet, we simply cannot afford to lose these jobs.

Lastly, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report showing the loss of 533,000 jobs in November, the highest single month loss in 34 years, and one of the most dismal reports in the Bureau's 124-year existence.

These figures were simply staggering, and we can and we must do better. And by passing this legislation today, we are taking a first step in doing so.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to quickly consider H.R. 7321 and enact this much-needed legislation as soon as possible. I ask them, and I hope they will have more faith in our automobile industry, and I encourage all of my colleagues to continue the strict standards of accountability as we move forward.

With that, I yield back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ECUADOR FACING HUMANITARIAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from a remarkable trip to Ecuador. From November 8 through 13, I traveled through northern Ecuador looking at the refugee crisis on its border with Colombia and on the effects of oil contamination on the land and people of the Amazon basin.

I saw firsthand the terrible human and environmental costs that have resulted from the decades-long failure to properly clean the contamination left by oil drilling and production. Specifically, the sites I visited were those that were under the control of Texaco, now Chevron. I visited oil pits that were poorly constructed, poorly remediated, or remediated not at all. This has left a toxic legacy for poor campesinos and indigenous peoples.

I also saw the infrastructure that Chevron/Texaco created that allowed for the wholesale dumping of formation water and other highly toxic materials directly into the Amazon and its waters.

As an American citizen, the degradation and contamination left behind in a poor part of the world by this U.S. company made me angry and ashamed.

The drinking water for thousands of poor people is horribly unfit, even deadly. Children are drinking and bathing in water that reeks of oil. In one village, San Carlos, I couldn't come across a family that hasn't been touched by cancer. Mothers brought their children to show me the terrible rashes and sores that covered their bodies.

A lawsuit has been filed against Chevron by 30,000 Amazon residents demanding that the company accept responsibility for substandard production practices and help with the clean-up efforts. Chevron, for its part, asserts it was released from responsibility in the 1990s, and the release remains in legal dispute.

Neither Congress nor the United States Government should get involved in a legal matter that will soon be decided in a court of law. But as the years pass and nothing is done, the situation on the ground has become more and more desperate for thousands of poor people, and the pollution spreads deeper into the soil, the water, and the Amazon basin.

I firmly believe these people and their environment need help and they need help now.

As I traveled further north towards the border frontier, I found a growing humanitarian and security crisis. Eight years ago, the United States started pouring military aid—\$4.8 billion of it—into Colombia, much of it focused on military operations in the violent coca growing zones just across the border from Ecuador.

The result has been an alarming spillover of violence into Ecuador's peaceful but impoverished borderlands. Over 200,000 Colombians—a number rivaling many refugee crises in Africa—have fled to Ecuador to escape the violence and intense fighting between guerrilla groups, the Colombian military, and Colombian paramilitary militias.

As the GAO recently reported, harsh U.S. counter-drug strategies have failed to halt cocaine production in Colombia or ease the violence that comes with this illegal economy. Instead, organized crime has been pushed across the border into Ecuador.

Mr. Speaker, I stood on the banks of the San Miguel River, which marks the border between Putumayo, Colombia, and Sucumbios, Ecuador. Only a few hundred yards of water separate the two.

Mr. Speaker, Colombia's war is literally bleeding, violently, into Ecuador, which has no history of illegal drug cultivation or insurgency from its own people. Tensions between the two nations are high and diplomatic relations remain cut off.

The refugee communities that I spoke with in Lago Agrio, Barranca Bermeja, and Puerto Mestanza feel abandoned and discriminated against.